

ON THE VERGE of the new millennium, the time was right for the Minnesota Historical Society to try a new approach to its ongoing work of cultural documentation. Although the Society has been collecting photographs since the Civil War, it had never commissioned new work.

Minnesota 2000 was the brainchild of members of the local photography community who met regularly, beginning in 1994, to design a project to mark this significant date. The federal government's Farm Security Administration photography project during the Great Depression of the 1930s was one model; others included the *Changing Chicago* project of the 1980s, now preserved at the Chicago Historical Society. When the MHS agreed to sponsor and raise funds for the *Minnesota 2000* project, it became a reality rather than a good idea.

Beginning in 1997, twelve talented photographers were selected to photograph the state and its people

as a permanent record of this time and place. *Minnesota 2000* was completed in September 1999 and will be a major component of the fine-art photography collection in the MHS Library.

Though new and untested by time, *Minnesota 2000* photos fit well into an historical collection. Obviously, they will become the next gen-

eration's historic photos. In addition, they can be used as a benchmark in two ways: for comparing to photos from the past and for recording scenes that could be photographed again in the future. Comparing them with historical images can be great fun and very instructive, revealing details in both photographs that would have passed unnoticed if only one of the pair were studied. Using the new visual resources database on the Society's website, a viewer can, for example, call up historic images of recreation and compare them with photos of people at play in the *Minnesota 2000* collection. Insights emerge, whether one compares the new photos to matching images, as in the Mille Lacs Lake fishing pair, shown below, or to something completely different, as in the ice-fishing and ice-harvesting pictures.

THE DOCUMENTARY photographers for *Minnesota 2000* were chosen for the quality of their work and the apt-

DTA 2000

A Photo Documentary for the Future

ness of their proposals. They were encouraged to propose topics that would capture typical moments in Minnesota life and telling views of the landscape at the end of the twentieth century. Nearly 100 photographers submitted proposals to a jury of professional curators and historians. The 12 selected were assigned to spend one year pursuing their topic, to bring in work prints periodically to show the project advisers, and to make 30 fine-art prints of the best and most significant images.

Subject specialists were invited to participate in the project as resources for the photographers. For example, Dr. John Borchert, professor emeritus of geography at the University of Minnesota, helped Chris Faust better understand the Minnesota River Valley. A teenager, Anne Preller from Woodbury, commented on Keri Pickett's depictions of teen life. Dr. David Brennan, director of the Small Business Insti-

tute at the University of St. Thomas, helped Mark Jensen decide which of the thousands of small, family-owned businesses to photograph. Project advisers George Slade, a photo scholar and writer, and Rob Silberman, associate professor of art history at the University of Minnesota, stimulated ideas and discussions during project meetings. They also helped the project director and photographers select the final images. The project assistant was Gayle Crampton.

A privately funded project, *Minnesota 2000* would not have been possible without the gifts of Alfred and Ingrid Lenz Harrison, John and Ruth Huss, Robert J. and Sarah-Maud W. Sivertsen, and the Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation.

The *Minnesota 2000* photos shown here introduce the style and subject matter of the 12 projects. In addition, 120 of the images will be on exhibit at the Society from

January through June 2000. These will also be published in *Minnesota in Our Time: A Photographic Portrait*, forthcoming from MHS Press in spring. The complete portfolio—all 360 photos—can be seen in the Society's library.* Viewing the entire project gives a closer look at what the photographers observed on their visual journeys. In addition to the 30 finished exhibition prints, the project archive contains all of the work-print photos, adviser meeting notes, end-of-project interviews with each artist, and paper documentation collected along the way. The following sampler provides a glimpse of the twentieth century with implications for life in the twenty-first.

* The prints will be accessible for research and nonprofit educational use; for fine-art prints and commercial use, the photographer should be contacted.

Bonnie Wilson is the curator of sound and visual collections at the Minnesota Historical Society and the project director for MINNESOTA 2000.

SNOWBIRDS

The Dahls watching the Minnesota weather news, Naples, Florida, December 1997.

- As retired Minnesotans fled south for the winter, Terry Gydesen followed to document their life-styles. Gydesen had previously photographed politicians, including Jesse Jackson and Paul Wellstone, so she was used to being on the road. As an introduction to the life-style, she drove with her parents to Florida but then struck off on her own to Arizona, using her little blue Volkswagen bus as a base of operations. She photographed intensively in Apache Junction and Quartzsite, Arizona.

The photo below of Jan and Dave Dahl from Winona shows their daily ritual of watching the Minnesota weather via satellite. They then report the conditions up north to their neighbors in the Crystal Lake RV Resort. The Dahls are surrounded by the artifacts of their RV life-style, including a laptop computer, a comfy lounging chair, and family photos. Outside the windshield, the Florida landscape contrasts sharply with the wind-chill readings on the television screen.

- In December 1924 a *Minneapolis Journal* newspaper photographer took the photo above of Mr. and Mrs. John Morton of Minneapolis listening to a crystal radio, a common form of entertainment at the time. Like the Dahls, the Mortons are surrounded by the elements of their lives, including family photos. But the clothing, furniture, and body postures are so very different that one can see that the Dahls in their RV will appear “old fashioned” to people in the future.





INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES

Jamie Ross, Bionic Laboratory, Minneapolis, November 1997.

- Shopkeepers and their shops have interested Mark Jensen for many years. For *Minnesota 2000*, he visited independently owned businesses that are typical of what we see along major streets, in our neighborhoods, and in small strip malls on the fringes of town. Many of these are owned by newcomers to the state from Southeast Asia, India, and the Middle East. Others belong to young entrepreneurs taking over from their parents or beginning with a new idea.

Jamie Ross opened her body-piercing parlor on Lake Street in 1997 after designing and building the stainless-steel-and-glass environment and fixtures herself. About half of her customers are 18 to 25 years old, but the others come from many age groups, including a grandmother with seven gold hoops.

- In 1934 the women in Jackie Ann's Beauty Shop at 1919 Emerson Avenue North in Minneapolis were pursuing beauty just as vigorously as Ross's clients do in the Bionic Laboratory. The elaborate hair-drying mechanism mirrors the sleek design of some of Ross's interior pieces.



MAIN STREET

Saturday morning, Detroit Lakes, April 1998.

- Peter Latner chose to explore Minnesota's Main Streets (below) "to document a part of our landscape and culture that wears the look of two centuries as it leans toward a third." He spent time in more than 30 towns throughout the state where he discovered many vacant store fronts, some architectural transformations, and a few thriving regional centers like Detroit Lakes.

Saturday morning in Detroit Lakes challenges the modern stereotype of the dying and decaying Main Street. Its success can be attributed to its location near many lakes, its role as the county seat, and its function as a regional commercial center. Its signs give evidence of contemporary living: computer technologies, body building, and travel, as well as a coincidental reference to snowbirds, another *Minnesota 2000* topic.





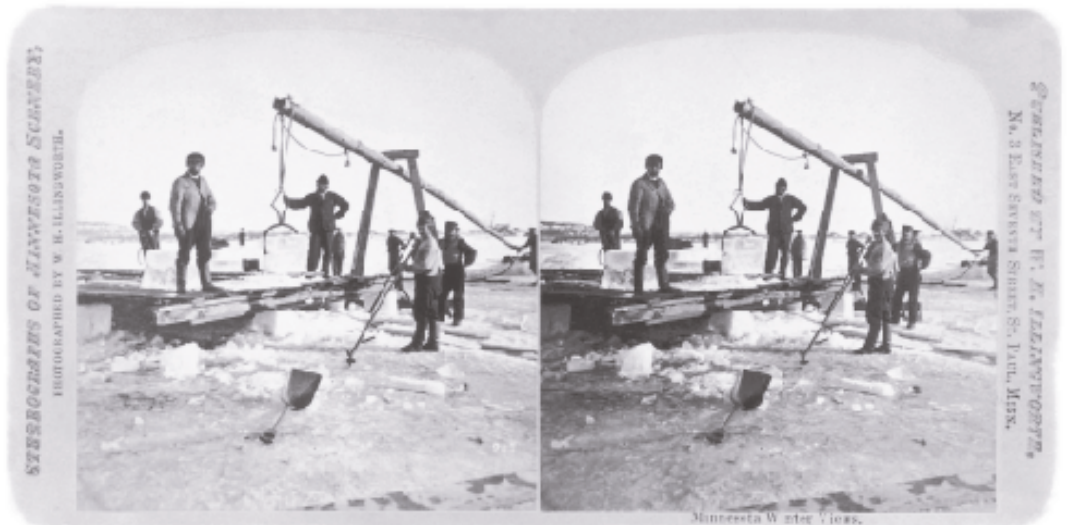
MINNESOTA RIVER

Doug Knute fishing near Highway 25, Belle Plaine, 1998.

- Panoramic photographer Chris Faust finds the Minnesota River Valley fertile for beautiful views and signs of human impact on the environment. As he explored the area for *Minnesota 2000*, he found people using the valley and the river for their recreation and livelihood. But to do this, they change its appearance and its course with bridges, dikes, dams, farms, factories, casinos, and malls.

Knute fishes for pan fish every Sunday through the winter. “Most guys I run into that are doing ice fishing, they’re not gonna eat the things. They’re just down there to spend some time. It’s kind of a guy thing, you know, you gotta work on something and talk at the same time.”

- For many years, the river was a place to harvest ice as well as fish. Thousands of households and businesses depended on this ice for refrigeration. These men, working on the Mississippi River near St. Paul in 1870, are using ice-handling tools that seem as arcane today as Knute’s ice auger will be to viewers in the future. Historical photos, like this stereograph by William Illingworth, show that daily work 100 years ago was more typically done outdoors than it is today.





RURAL DIVERSITY

Buddhist ceremony for Laotians, Mountain Lake, 1998.

- Many of Minnesota's small towns are a new home to people from all over the world, perhaps more obviously today than a century ago when Scandinavians, Italians, and Germans were the new immigrants. Wing Young Huie visited Mountain Lake and St. James in south-central Minnesota to document this diversity in rural communities. Mountain Lake is home to about 55 Laotian families, and St. James has a sizable population of Latinos. In general, Huie found, these new Minnesotans are pleased to be here, practicing their cultural traditions and socializing with others from their homeland.

Once a month monks from the Twin Cities travel to Mountain Lake to conduct a ceremony for Buddhists in the area. The participants are “making merit,” preparing themselves and their ancestors for the afterlife by offering food and money trees to the monks. Afterwards, the celebrants go outside to feast on the food they have brought.

- Frank Higgins, shown here preaching to lumberjacks in a bunkhouse, was known throughout the lumber camps of northern Minnesota as a traveling missionary nicknamed “Sky Pilot.” His home churches at Barnum and Bemidji supported his outreach, accomplished on snowshoes or by dogsled six days a week. By 1910, when this photo was made, he had become nationally famous for pioneering this mission among the jacks.



THE WATER'S EDGE

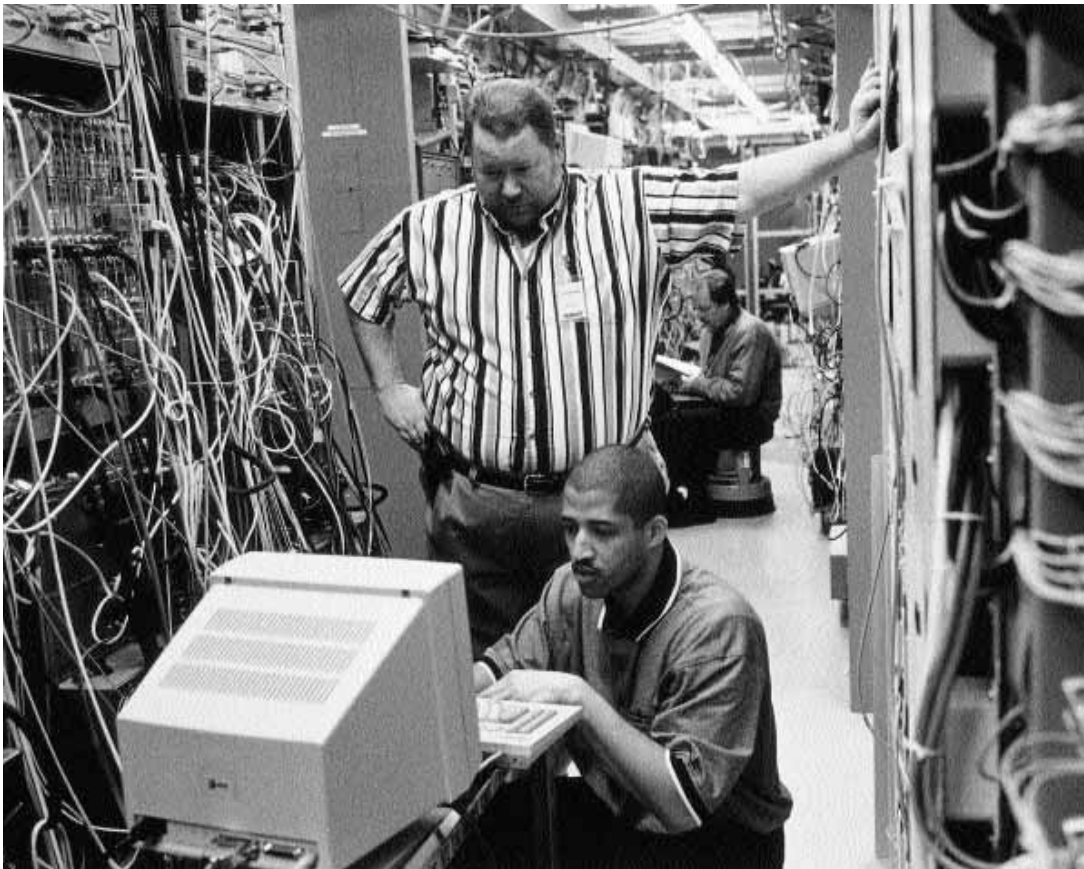
Mille Lacs Lake fishing opener, May 1999.

- Known for his engaging street photography, Thomas Arndt directed his camera along many pathways at the water's edge for his *Minnesota 2000* contribution. He portrayed myriad scenes of fishing, swimming, and relaxing to compare with pictures from the past, but he also caught the joggers, the in-line skaters, and the barbecuers who populate our lakesides today. As Arndt said in his proposal, "If we were allowed to have only one quintessential, enduring image of Minnesota life, it's a safe bet that there would be a lake in that picture."

Opening day of the fishing season in Minnesota is an almost sacred ritual for fishermen. It often occurs on Mother's Day, creating conflicts and divided loyalties, unless the mom fishes, too. Mille Lacs, one of the largest fishing lakes in the state, has become a symbol of ardent angling. In the picture below, three guys in serious fishing clothing with serious fishing gear are on the verge of their annual adventure.

- The postcard view (above) of a busy dock on Mille Lacs in 1920 contrasts sharply with Arndt's 1999 photo. Most of these men and boys appear to be wearing their everyday clothes, and they're setting out in simple wooden boats powered by oars. Their bamboo poles will probably catch the same size and type of fish as their modern counterparts'. Now, however, they would probably release their catch.





TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKERS

Testing equipment, US West Enterprise testing facility, February 1999.

- Unseen workers and their workplaces are of great interest to Stephen Dahl. He chose to photograph telecommunications workers because their industry is growing so rapidly at the end of the twentieth century. Telecommunications influences all of our lives as telephone and internet consumers, yet we know very little about the work required to deliver the machines and the services. In order to look more deeply into the work and environment, Dahl concentrated on three companies: ADC Telecommunications Inc., Norstan, and US West.

These workers are testing equipment for a company that wants to market a new telecommunications device. Whether as small as a connector or as complex as a circuit board, any device tested by these knowledgeable workers and their state-of-the-art equipment is more likely to sell successfully. Although interesting visually, this particular environment was described by one worker as “bad wire management.”



TEENAGERS

Girlfriends getting dressed for a dance, Woodbury, September 1998.

- Teens interest Keri Pickett because they are energetic and honest and passionate about their own beliefs and concerns: “This is the time of life when their adult freedom grows and lifelong attitudes and habits are formed. These are the people who are inheriting our world and they will be in charge of our future.” During the course of her project, she photographed teens in 30 widely diverse situations, from a suburban dance to a homeless shelter, from a Gay Pride festival to a wrestling match.

The ritual of preparing for a dance is a bonding experience for many young women. According to Pickett, there were many questions about “What do you think?” “How does this look?” and “Should I do more?” revealing some insecurity and need for approval. After they reassure one another, they will be ready to emerge from this private scene into the spotlight of parents with cameras and dates with approving gazes.



VISITORS IN STATE PARKS

*Snowshoer and daughter,
Fort Snelling State Park, February 1999.*

- Tourists were the intended subjects of David Heberlein's project, but most of the people he found using the parks were Minnesotans who visited regularly instead of just touring. They returned many times to ski, camp, attend demonstrations, or simply relax. Guided by a Department of Natural Resources parks and recreation specialist who advised him on the newest and most popular structures and activities, Heberlein documented Minnesotans in 14 parks.

Beth Rutter came to Fort Snelling State Park with her husband and eight-month-old daughter to try out the latest in snowshoes as part of the Winter Trails 99 Snowshoe Festival. The Rutters are active outdoor sports people, outfitted with appropriate clothing and equipment like the backpack for their daughter. The type of snowshoe she is wearing, called a Sherpa, is designed for groomed trails, not for striking out into untamed woods as people once did.

- One hundred years earlier, James Methven photographed this Native American woman from Mille Lacs gathering food or fuel with a cradleboard on her back. If this were a winter scene, she might be wearing large wooden snowshoes so that she could perform her tasks on top of deep, fresh snow.



INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

Lunch break, Andersen Windows, April 1999.

Documenting industrial workers in Minnesota was David Parker's plan, a departure from his usual subject of child labor around the world. As an occupational-safety physician, he is accustomed to viewing industrial work areas. He was given excellent access to foundries, a food-processing plant, and some well-known Minnesota companies like Toro and Andersen Windows.

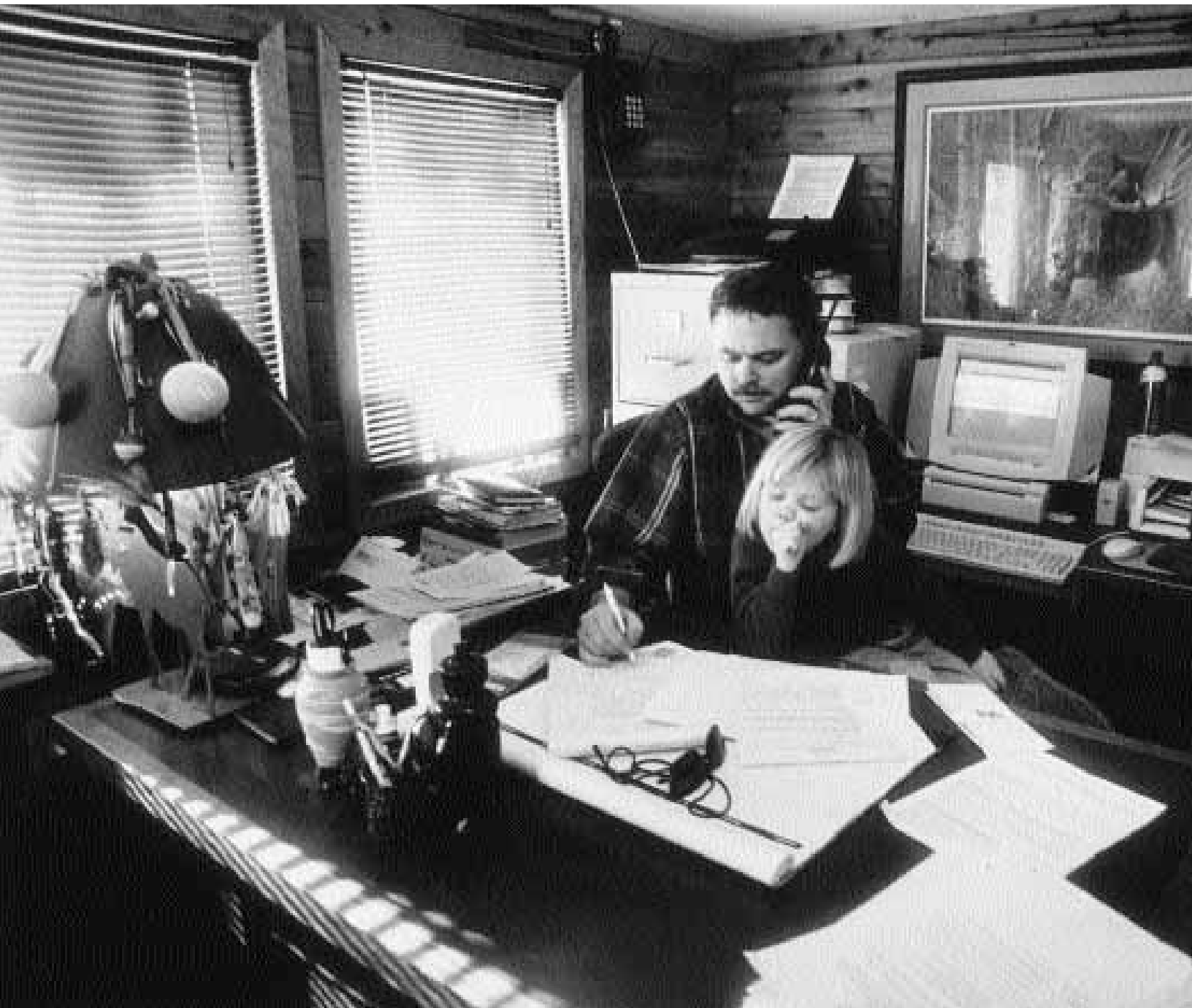
Near her work station on the paint line, this woman lunches out of the ubiquitous plastic container that is one small sign of our time. Parker remarked that he found many examples at Andersen of people personalizing the workplace with icons meaningful to them. Football discussions were especially heated, and workers mounted small exhibits supporting their favorite teams.

RAISING AND EDUCATING CHILDREN

Jay Parmeter and Zoe, in his home office on Serpent Lake near Crosby, December 1998.

Geordie Griffiths recognized the important role children play in our future and decided to document the many ways teachers and parents are guiding them. Focusing on the Twin Cities and the Crosby area, he photographed children in 60 different learning situations, including such diverse places as a girls' martial arts academy, a corporate day-care center, and a home school.

From his office in the boathouse, Parmeter successfully manages his executive and technical search firm while caring for his five-year-old daughter when she is not attending kindergarten. A cellular phone, computer, and fax machine enabled him to move his 18-year-old business from Cottage Grove near St. Paul to a rural area in central Minnesota. Jay and his wife Kathy wanted to provide their two daughters a better education than the urban schools were offering and enable Jay to pursue his passion for fishing and hunting.





URBAN INDIANS

Donovan and Terry's wedding limo, Minneapolis, May 1998.

Native American photojournalist Joe Allen feels that the current media focus on treaty rights and casinos distorts perceptions of contemporary Indian life. He decided to show other views of life among the 30,000 American Indians living in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. From his base of operation with *The Circle* newspaper at the American Indian Center in Minneapolis, he photographed families and individuals whose lives intersect at the center, illustrating the diversity of the community as well as the cultural ties that bind it.

Donovan Goodman of White Earth Reservation in Minnesota and Terry Mousseaux of Pine Ridge in South Dakota were married in Holy Rosary Catholic Church. The ceremony, melding Catholic and Indian traditions, included drumming and saying vows while wrapped in a star quilt. □



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